

Cheryl Haywood
Ms. Haywood
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Hugs Come from Helping Hands

Helping others makes a difference. In *Enrique's Journey*, Sonia Nazario reports about the struggle that immigrants face when they leave countries in Central America and head to the United States without legal authority. Surprisingly, much of the support that these young and poor migrants receive comes from people who are in poverty themselves. In Veracruz, a poor region of Mexico, upstanders give for many reasons; a spirit of generosity from their cultures, because they want to protest Mexico's policies against immigration; and simply because they believe in helping others. One person expresses, "I figure when I die, I can't take anything with me. So why not give?" (Nazario 99). If people have enough to shelter, feed, and clothe their families, they can help others even in small ways that reflect the humanity of people. This help allows immigrants like Enrique to make it through the day and continue on his journey.

Similarly, in *Make Lemonade*, by Virginia Euwer Wolff, the main character LaVaughn helps Jolly, a teenage single mother, to take care of her children. LaVaughn is not well off, and she works while in school as a babysitter to earn money for college. When Jolly loses her job, LaVaughn has to choose between helping out by babysitting for free and babying sitting for pay. LaVaughn opts to work without pay and reflects, "One good thing you do in a day for somebody else don't cost you" (Wolff 120). LaVaughn realizes that she doesn't need the money

that day and that she enjoys taking care of Jolly's children. She is willing to sacrifice her long-term goal of saving money for college in order to help Jolly return to school. Even though LaVaughn is only 14 years old and has her own struggles with school and grammar, she feels proud of her choice even though she doesn't earn public recognition for it.

Helping others is something that all people can do. The symbol of an open, outstretched hand represents the ability to give help and uplift others. By simply offering a hand to others, we can help them. Helping doesn't require wealth or social status. We live on this earth together and our lives are interconnected. There are many ways to help others: giving food, volunteering, and simply listening. At some point in our lives, we will all need the help of others: help to study for a test, help to reach an item off the top shelf of the store, help to get through TSA if we are late for a flight, help to grieve the death of a friend, or help to be honest about a mistake. Helping others shows that we are human and have empathy, and it feels really positive and important! It will also benefit everyone in society because when people are supported, they are able to accomplish more and do better in their jobs, schools, and communities. Life is difficult but easier when we help each other – especially when doing so does not disadvantage you. So practice helping, uplifting, and giving support to people around you – especially those who need it. Hugs are helping hands.